March 19, 1981

Professor Charles A. R. Hoare
Oxford University
45 Banbury Road
Oxford OX2 6PE
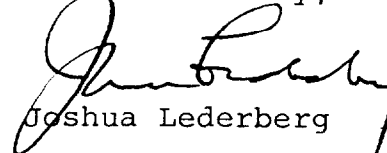England

Dear Professor Hoare:

I was very much interested to read your 1980 Turing Lecture in the CACM recently. If you have a letterpress reprint to spare I would be grateful for it.

The main reason I am writing is to ask you to elaborate a bit further about your anxieties concerning ADA. You used as a horror story the failure of a "space rocket to Venus". Perhaps your allusion was to the 1962 software failure of a Ranger mission to the moon; but I would be happy to be corrected further about the specific incident.

More important I have been trying to find a further postmortem on that incident that would help me to relate the anomaly to the question of language design. It would be difficult for me to go further without first tapping your own insight into the circumstance and into the design issue.

You are raising a principle that must be taken with the utmost seriousness and I simply ask you to provide me with the concrete detail that might help me follow it up.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg

Encl. Project Ranger: A Chronology
by R.C. Hall